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SUBJECT: UN STAFFER'S PROPOSAL ON DARFUR NEGOTIATIONS

1. (SBU) On April 22, Gerry McHugh, UN Envoy Jan Eliasson's chief strategist, told poloffs that the Darfur peace process needs strong U.S. leadership, not more large, multi-lateral meetings. McHugh offered a number of uncharacteristic UN ideas including: 1) Any deal will be brokered behind the scenes, most likely with US intervention, starting with JEM and focusing completely on power sharing; other movements and areas of negotiations will follow. 2) The U.S. and France should make it clear to Chadian President Idriss Deby that continued (and possibly increased) Western support for his administration is contingent on his decision to cut ties with JEM. 3) With the upcoming U.S. presidential elections, there is a limited window of opportunity (of at most two or three months) in which the peace process has a chance for serious progress, especially given the US initiative to engage with the GOS. 4) The U.S. should put more pressure on the rebel movements, and if they continue to be uncooperative, the UN Security Council should issue a resolution expelling rebel leaders from Western states.

SQUEEZING CHAD AND JEM

2. (SBU) According to McHugh, in its recent consultations with the UNAMID's Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) made it very clear that its main priority is to continue to receive support from the Government of Chad and to give reciprocal military support back to President Deby while seeking to escalate violence in Darfur and beyond (into Kordofan). McHugh said that UNAMID and the international community should make Chad choose between continued (and perhaps augmented) Western support and the GoC's backing of JEM. According to McHugh, Deby is a very logical and tactical thinker. He realizes that he cannot rely on the support of Darfur rebels indefinitely, and may be persuaded to cut his ties with JEM. McHugh added that President Deby wants U.S. support, and that the U.S. could use its influence on both Chad and France to make Deby more cooperative. McHugh stated that it is untenable to continue the peace process while the Governments of Chad and Sudan use militias and rebel groups to do their dirty work. He stated that it may be better to bring JEM into the Chadian government and make their relationship official, or cut them off completely. McHugh stated that it is even worth brainstorming on some "crazy ideas" such as offering JEM's Khalil Ibrahim a position as the Chadian Minister of Defense, if JEM is brought officially into the GoC.

3. (SBU) According to McHugh, it may be possible to cut a bilateral deal between JEM and the Government of Sudan in the next six months. He stated that JEM claims that they are willing to engage politically, but that it is apparent that they take the military option more seriously. The U.S. should pressure JEM, Chad, and other countries with influence in Chad (i.e. France) to convince JEM to take negotiations more seriously, stated McHugh. Continuing, he said that the majority of JEM's leadership works and resides in Europe. He said that Western countries should use this to their

advantage. They should tell JEM and other rebel movements that they should cooperate with the international community or the Security Council will issue a resolution expelling rebel leadership from Europe. According to McHugh, it would "not cost the U.S. much" to convince Britain and even France, and it could be very significant in moving the peace process along. He stated that many JEM and SLA-Abdel Wahid leaders have strong ties to Europe's institutions and leaders and that this expulsion would deal a significant blow to uncooperative rebel actors.

BIGGER THAN THE DPA

14. (SBU) McHugh stated that while the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) is the starting place for negotiations, any deal will have to be much larger than the DPA. He said that the focus of negotiations should be on a serious power sharing arrangement, and other issues such as wealth-sharing will follow. He said that the weakness of the DPA is its power sharing arrangements, saying that the number of seats given to DPA signatories at the state legislature and presidency is insufficient.

"AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE U.S."

15. (SBU) McHugh stated that greater U.S. involvement in the peace process presents an opportunity to the U.S. He added that Darfur is a significant foreign policy objective that the Bush administration might realistically achieve in the next six months. He said he realizes that if the U.S. embarks upon this approach, individuals within the U.S. Government must be recognized for their key contributions in bringing the rebels to the table. McHugh stated that he will continue to present these ideas to the British, French, and other capitals. He said that Jan Eliasson is ready to push some of these ideas in the coming months, but only if they are met with initial reception by the U.K., U.S., and France. McHugh noted that while Eliasson's term is due to end in June, there may be the

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opportunity to renew his term - something that, in McHugh's view, looks more likely given the lack of viable replacements and delays in the appointment of other leadership positions. (Note: McHugh also stated that Taye-Brook Zerihoun, the Principal Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sudan, will soon be leaving his position to become the SRSR in Cyprus. End Note.)

COMMENT

16. (SBU) McHugh is the most advanced in his thinking among the UN's JMST team and if he can sell these ideas to Eliasson (who he claims is open to them) it may be possible for a joint JMST-US-UK-France initiative to push the parties forward behind the scenes in the coming months. Without the strategic behind-the-scenes approach that McHugh describes, nothing very positive is likely to happen on the Darfur peace process for at least another year, leaving UNAMID exposed and vulnerable. Notably, this meeting is the third this week where JMST and UNAMID leadership have asked for an injection of American leadership into the foundering UNAMID peace process, a clear sign of desperation on their part.

17. (SBU) The news that Eliasson intends to stay on past June is troubling, given his lack of a coherent vision and the limited time he spends in Darfur. The peace process is at a stage that requires more sophistication and energy than the current Eliasson-Salim team has previously exhibited. The U.S. has called on the UN Secretariat to appoint a chief mediator since June 2007, and we should make clear to the UN Secretariat that the delay--whether due to the dearth of good candidates, complications with the AU, or UN inefficiency--is neither acceptable nor a justification to continue Eliasson's weak leadership of the peace process.

18. (SBU) McHugh overestimates the willingness of European countries to support punitive measures against Darfur's rebel movements; France and other European governments have rebuffed every suggestion to expel rebel leaders over the last 18 months. In this context, a discrete, multi-track approach to the peace process--that includes separate, sustained, and focused discussions with JEM and SLA-Abdel Wahid--led by either a more agile UN/AU team or by the U.S. (but

with at least the tacit involvement of key European governments, such as France) is the best way forward. If the bilateral process with the GOS continues, it is also worth seeing how this may be linked to the Darfur peace process. Of course we need to recognize that securing an agreement from both Abdel Wahid and Khalil Ibrahim is a long-shot (although the former may prove more flexible than the latter), but it's worth a try and this strategic behind-the scenes approach is the best plan we have heard from anyone on the JMST team in a long time.

FERNANDEZ